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Listening, the most efficient means of learning in the early grades, is replaced by reading as an efficient method for learning after the seventh grade. For an investigation of the effectiveness with which college students may be taught listening, lesson plans were developed from a programed instruction book --Principles of Selective Listening-- that was written in 1968 under the direction of John W. Blythe. A sample of 132 students at East Texas University was drawn from students who were enrolled in a Personality Foundations course. Each student was given a hearing test to determine his ability to hear, the Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests, Form Fm to ascertain his intelligence quotient, and the Brown-Carlsen Listening Comprehension Test, Form Am as a pre- and post-test. Pre-test and mental ability scores made it possible to equate groups of students. From the total sample, 2 classes were designated as control, and 2 as experimental groups, and the 4 classes met 3 days a week for 1 hour and 20 minutes. It was concluded that listening ability can be measured objectively, but that a person's ability to listen cannot be increased regardless of his mental ability. The null hypothesis --that there was no significant difference between students who were taught effective listening habits and those who were not-- was accepted. The report contains recommendations for future research on the value of the teaching of listening. (WM)

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A STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING LISTENING (in College)

BY

DR. MACK R. BROILES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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EAST TEXAS SCHOOL STUDY COUNCIL

EAST TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
COMMERCE, TEXAS

INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century is definitely the listening century. Never before in the history of this country has there been a greater need for listening skill. Nichols and Stevens stated:

> The written word is slow compared with the spoken word, a factor that makes listening more and more important in this age of speed. In times of crisis the President of the United States rushes to the microphones, and it is conceivable that every man, woman and child in the country might listen to him as he talks. When matters must be settled in a hurry in todays' business, the slow procedures of paper-work are often dropped and people reach for telephones. Even in the normal course of business we find that white-collar workers receive some 40 per cent of their salaries for listening. The world's most important affairs are conducted around conference tables, and at any given moment in a conference, when one person talks the remainder should be listening. We climb aboard great airlines that may take us into clouds so dense that they obscure the wingtips; and as we ride through the murky skies, our lives often depend upon the listening ability of the men on the flight deck.[1]

According to Bird, most people are poor listeners. He believed that without specific training, people do not develop adequate listening skills to meet the needs of modern society. Yet, it is while speaking and listening that people normally exchange ideas. One might then be concerned as to the reasons why listen-

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[1]Ralph G. Nichols and Leonard A. Stevens, Are You Listening? (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1957), p. viii.

ing has not always been a major concern in education.[2]

Nichols stated that the following false assumptions may have delayed the development of training programs in effective listening:

1. Intelligence is the predeominant factor in efficient listening, and since a teacher cannot raise a youngster's intelligence, there is littel point in worrying about his listening ability.

2. Poor listening is largely a matter of poor hearing.

3. Things we hear have little influence upon us and only things we read are really important.[3]

Nichols suggested that the whole task of effective listening would be greatly simplified if one were guided by the following four principles:

1. The listener, rather than the speaker, is mainly responsible for any learning which may take place. This is not an easy job and takes continuous work. The listener must put forth an honest effort and genuinely try to grasp each fact or idea that he feels may be of future use to him.

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[2]Donald E. Bird, "Listening," National Education Association Journal, 49:31-32, November, 1960.

[3]Ralph G. Nichols, "He Who Has Ears--There is a Real Awakening to the Importance of Instruction in How to Listen," National Education Association Journal, 45:15, January, 1956.

2. The listener must understand fully a speaker's point before he can accurately judge it. Students should be urged constantly to withhold evaluation until their comprehension is complete.

3. The importance of note-taking to efficient listening varies with the utilization of the notes that have been taken. The mere acquirement of notes, however, is not scholarly; the real issue is one of use. Notes that are brief and meaningful definitely reinforce learning, if they can be quickly interpreted at a later time.

4. Continual attentiveness to verbal communication is dependent upon the listener's involvement in the information being presented. Whereas the typical lecture is given at approximately one hundred words per minute, most students think normally at a pace four or five times that fast. This rate differential tends to encourage mental tangents. To combat these tangents, one needs certain techniques: (a) mental anticipation of each of the speaker's points, (c) mental recapitulation of points already developed, and (d) an occasional search for implied meanings.[4]

SUMMARY OF RELATED LITERATURE

People have been listening all their lives and should be skilled in the process by virtue of constant practice; however,

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[4] Ibid., p. 16.

research indicated that individuals have not been taught to listen. Articles have been written about the importance of listening efficiency. Most authors indicated that good listeners were able to determine the speaker's purpose, to grasp the main idea, to separate the essential points which support them from mere details, to distinguish fact from opinion, to match his ideas with those of the speaker, and to distinguish that to which he listens from his own background of knowledge about the subject. Writers also agreed that educators must teach students to listen more intelligently and to use more effectively what they learn through their ears.

Research has revealed that listening is the most efficient means of presenting material in the early grades; however, this listening efficiency seems to vanish around the sixth or seventh grade. After the seventh grade, research indicated that reading appears to more efficient as a method for learning. Although research projects have conclusively proven that there is a definite need for instruction in listening, it seems that only a few schools have begun to do anything about the teaching of listening.

In reviewing the research which has been reported, it is evident that various techniques and procedures were used in investigating the projects; therefore, it becomes increasingly apparent that additional research is needed to solve the essential questions related to the effects of instruction upon improving listening skills. It is agreed also that there is a need for more effective

investigation in the field of listening; hence, it was the purpose of this study to investigate the effectiveness of teaching listening.

PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a significant difference in the effectiveness with which college students can be effectively taught listening.

The related literature was carefully researched with most of the authors in agreement that we are living in an era when listening plays an important role in each of our lives. Although literature studied indicated that listening and reading are regarded as similar abilities, the differences between listening and reading abilities are many and varied. Listening depends upon the speaker's effectiveness in presenting material; whereas, reading abilities do not depend upon the author's effectiveness to such an extent. In listening, the rate of presentation is controlled by the speaker, but the reading rate is controlled by the reader, himself. The reader can reread at a speed of his own choice, but the listener does not have this prerogative.

After the literature was researched, suitable lesson plans were developed to meet the needs of this study. The lesson plans were developed from a programmed instruction book entitled Principles of Selective Listening. It was developed in 1968 by Argyle's professional staff under the direction of John W. Blythe.

The population from which the sample was drawn consisted of students from East Texas State University who were enrolled in General Studies 161 during the fall semester of 1968-1969. General Studies 161 is Personality Foundations which is a study of personality which utilizes concepts from the fields of psychology, sociology, and anthropology. This is a required course for each student attending East Texas State University.

The sample consisted of four classes with a total enrollment of 132 students. These four classes met from 10:00 to 11:20, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday of each week. Two classes were randomly designated as the control group, and two classes were randomly designated as the experimental group.

The experimental design used in this study was comprised of equated groups. Efforts were made to keep these groups as identical as possible with the exception of the experimental variable--the teaching of listening skills--being introduced to the experimental group. Groupings were equated by randomization, mental abilities, and pre-experimental characteristics as indicated by pre-tests.

A hearing test was given by the Speech and Hearing Clinic of East Texas State University to test the student's ability to hear. The Brown-Carlsen Listening Comprehension Test, Form Am, was selected to serve in the capacity of both pre-test and post-test. The Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests, Form Fm, was administered to ascertain individual student intelligence quotients.

After preliminary planning, the actual experiment was initiated and conducted.

CONCLUSIONS

It is the opinion of the researcher that the samples were reflective of the parent population and the data were factual and reliable; therefore, the following conclusions were made on the basis of the data gathered within this study.

1. A thorough and exhaustive investigation of current and past literature in the area of listening indicated that a definite need exists for the teaching of listening; however, very little progress has been realized in this field. Furthermore, the literature revealed that very few students within a formal curriculum of study have been taught the art of listening.

2. Listening ability can be measured objectively. This conclusion was supported, in part, from an extensive review of literature as well as testimonials from professionals involved in this discipline.

3. The experimental variable had no effect on the various mental levels within and among the experimental design. Therefore, it can be concluded that a person's ability to listen, as reflected in this study, cannot be statistically increased regardless of his mental ability.

4. As demonstrated by pre-test scores and mental ability scores, it was statistically possible to equate groups of students

for purposes of experimentation. This conclusion was based on group mean performances as tested by the t-test and variances of the groups as tested by the F-test.

5. In the opinion of the researcher who was actively involved in presenting the lesson plans, participating students displayed a high degree of interest in the presentations.

6. The null-hypothesis stating that there was no significant difference between students who were taught effective listening habits and those who have no such formal training was accepted Rationale used in forming this conclusion is based on the following findings:

a. Analysis of the upper post-test scores resulted in a t-test value of 1.550 which was statistically nonsignificant at the 0.05 level of confidence; however, it approached significance at the 0.20 level of confidence when the t-test score was greater than 1.315.

b. A more favorable achievement was prevalent within the middle group post-test scores when the analysis produced a t-test score of 1.798 which was not significant at the 0.05 level of confidence; but it approached significance at the 0.10 level of confidence when the t-score was greater than 1.706.

c. Further analysis revealed that the lower group post-test scores indicated a t-score of 0.039 that proved to be non-significant at the 0.05 level of confidence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Several observations made during the course of the study revealed the following recommendations for future research.

1. Additional investigation should be conducted to determine how much the teaching time factor contributes to the ultimate outcome.

2. Further research should be conducted to determine whether the experimental method has any correlation with teacher experience.

3. It is recommended that similar studies should be conducted to determine whether the effectiveness of either these lesson plans or other lesson plans would be more effective in the teaching of listening.

4. It is further suggested that a wider range of learning activities could yield more favorable outcomes.

5. It is recommended that a listening ability test should be constructed to more closely correlate with the listening lesson plans.

6. It is also recommended that the practice of the teaching of listening should be researched in the elementary, secondary, and higher education school levels.

7. Although no requirements have been established concerning the educational requirements for teachers of listening, consideration should be given mainly to those candidates who have at

least three years' teaching experience and have had training in the teaching of listening.

8. It is further suggested that a study be done to determine if either homogeneous or heterogeneous grouping would be more advantageous in the teaching of listening.

9. It is recommended that the instruction of listening should extend throughout the academic semester.

These recommendations are not intended to serve as conclusive evidence concerning the supporting of the value of the teaching of listening; however, these recommendations should provide the rationale necessary to support future research in this area.

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